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The
American Historical Review

THE HISTORICAL OPPORTUNITY IN AMERICA

THAT the people of the United States are fond of history is shown by their eagerness to make it, rather than by any habit of turning to the past as furnishing precedents for guidance in times of uncertainty or peril. We are at this moment engaged in an exciting episode of a contest already centuries old ; we feel the liveliest interest in the details of the historical drama going on before our eyes ; and we understand the importance of keeping an accurate record of the deeds of our popular heroes. We not only require detailed information as to what they say and do in moments of crisis and peril, but we insist on exact statements of what they would have done had circumstances been otherwise, what they declined to do, what they eat and drink or refuse to partake of, how they are clad and how they prepare themselves for a plunge into the sea under an enemy's guns. The events now passing are like the meteorological observations of Arctic travellers or the cases before a crowded court ; they accumulate faster than we can dispose of them ; and it will require a generation of historical writers to sift the crude materials and to work out the story of our own times.

Side by side with this fierce interest in the events of the day is a disregard, almost an ignorance, of the past history of America. At the end of a quiet and uneventful decade, the nation has suddenly awakened to the possibility of a new career ; but it seems disposed to look on the war, its causes and its results, as sudden and unexpected ; as something to be met and settled with due reference to the conditions of the end of the nineteenth century, but with an impatient ignoring of the slow development of a Spanish question in the four hundred years which have rolled away since America was discovered. There has been a passionate appeal to principles of for-

eign intercourse laid down by Washington and Jefferson and Monroe—and but little reference to the historical progress of the Cuban question as shown in almost every volume of our national records. We work over again, in foreign relations as in financial affairs, things which might be supposed to have been settled by the experience of a century. We cheerfully send arms and suggest organization to the Cubans, without troubling ourselves to remember how little aid and comfort we have had from insurgent allies in Canada, in Tripoli, in California, in New Mexico and in Samoa.

Yet the Americans are one of the most conservative of all peoples, and our whole political system rests on a respect for precedent. Without knowing the details of the Spanish-American domination the nation has somehow a consciousness that it has grown to be intolerable. If there be a fault, it is not that of the makers of history, but of the historians, who have failed to set clearly before their countrymen the course of our diplomatic policy; and of historical teachers, who have not imbued their students or pupils with the sense of the sequence of historical events.

Three years ago, in the opening number of the *AMERICAN HISTORICAL REVIEW*, a writer discussed the attitude of democracy toward the spirit of historical inquiry. Later experience shows no reason for abandoning his conclusions: the great American democracy both makes and records history; and gains in accuracy of vision from decade to decade. At the beginning of the fourth volume of the *REVIEW* it may be worth while to enter on a humbler inquiry—to see how far public bodies, individuals and societies are performing their task of collecting, preserving and opening up historical materials; what is now doing by American historical scholars to put into systematic form the details of our national history; how far writers are striving to tell the consecutive story of our national life; and what unused opportunities there are for transmitting the knowledge of our memorable past and uplifting present. The field is broad, the material enormous, the workers many, organizations powerful and increasing. What is doing and what may well be done for historical science in America?

Too little attention has so far been paid to the geographical and topographical side of American history; and a prime duty of Americans is the preservation and marking of our historical sites. In foreign cities not only are famous houses carefully preserved, such as Durer's in Nuremberg and the Plantins' in Antwerp, but memorial tablets everywhere abound. In America some of the stateliest and most memorable buildings have been

sacrificed, like the Hancock mansion in Boston ; but at present the tendency is to preserve really handsome public and private edifices ; and good people everywhere give money and time to keep these causes of civic pride before the eyes of their countrymen. The great incitement to this virtuous work was doubtless the purchase of Mount Vernon by the Ladies' Association, in the fifties, for which purpose Edward Everett coined his silver voice into golden eagles. Among hundreds of instances may be mentioned the restoration of the old Philadelphia city buildings, including Independence Hall ; the keeping up the old church at Williamsburg, Va. ; the establishment of the Rufus Putnam house at Rutland as a place of pilgrimage ; and the repair of Californian convent buildings. Many private owners acknowledge that the historical houses which they inhabit are subject to a kind of public use, like Madison's seat at Montpelier ; and some even busy themselves in working out the history of their habitation, and of the famous people who have entered its portals, as has been done by the present owner and occupant of the Craigie House in Cambridge.

By this time the principles which ought to govern the use of an historic building are widely recognized : it should be restored so far as possible to its condition at the time of its greatest historical importance—Carpenter's Hall as it was when the Continental Congress occupied it, and Monticello as Jefferson knew it. It should be called to the attention of the wayfarer by a suitable, permanent tablet of stone or brass ; if possible, it should be kept up as a public monument or at least freely opened to public view. It must be admitted that, though most of the buildings of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries which are still preserved have a dignity and beauty which makes them worth keeping as works of art, the nineteenth-century cradles of civil government in the West are not inspiring pieces of architecture, even in the few cases where they have not long ago been replaced. We do not realize that our ancestors went through the same process as ourselves, that they also had to build and rebuild, before they left the comely court-houses and quaint churches and stately dwellings which we now admire.

Even if the building be worthless or destroyed, the site may fitly be commemorated by a permanent inscription. We moderns are so overwhelmed with reading matter that we do not fully understand the effect of inscriptions which stand in public view—the literature of the bookless ; yet the noble sentences on the new Congressional Library will be read longer and will have greater influence than any contribution to the *AMERICAN HISTORICAL REVIEW*. There is a

citizen of Massachusetts who takes special delight in leading his English visitors to a stone in Arlington which reads :

Near this spot
Samuel Whittemore
Then 80 years old
Killed three British soldiers
April 19, 1775
He was shot, bayoneted
Beaten and left for dead,
But recovered and lived
To be 98 years of age.

However repellent to the British may be the toughness of able-bodied Samuel, the inscription does bring home strongly the force and passion of that April day when, as Sir Edward Thornton pithily stated it, "Englishmen now know that you were fighting our battles." The route from Boston to Concord is designated all the way by memorial stones ; and there are many historical marches of the Revolution and the Civil War which deserve like attention.

Tablets upon public buildings or within them are too little regarded in this country, though senseless decorations are not uncommon. For instance, the state house of Connecticut, one of the few beautiful and individual capitols, which might well bear tribute to the founders of the first written constitution of an American commonwealth, is embellished with "a charm" of two thousand tarnished buttons. Compare with this barbaric gewgaw the arms of the podestas which hang on the walls of the court of one of the public palaces at Florence. At the University of Padua the spacious "aula," the stone stairways, and the courts, are adorned with hundreds of coats of arms of noble students ; compare this historical monument with the bare walls of the buildings of an ancient seat of learning in Massachusetts, the authorities of which refused to permit a list of distinguished occupants of an eighteenth-century dormitory to be placed upon its walls, because it made distinctions. In the effort to preserve sets of portraits of governors of states and mayors of cities the public recognizes the desire to keep men once honored in the minds of other men. Shall our elder worthies plead in vain before a matter-of-fact generation, "Lord, keep my memory green" ?

The time to mark the sites of buildings and the scenes of notable events, the time to note the houses and the rooms once occupied by famous men, is the present, while they can be identified. Many are already lost or disappearing. Who knows where Governor Berkeley roared with official fury ? Who marks the college rooms of James Madison, of John Adams or Daniel Web-

ster? A line of white stones in the pavement of the Place de la Republique preserves the outlines of the Bastille; but who stops in his passage through Cincinnati streets to guess the site of Fort Washington? Most of the important battle-fields of the Civil War have been well marked, in the life-time of men who participated; but who has visited or could trace Pigwacket or Camden or Tippecanoe or Resaca de la Palma?

Another service to history and to patriotism would be to catalogue in each state and city the memorable historical sites, with such brief notes as may reveal their significance to the hasty searcher. There are guide-books to Plymouth, possibly to Providence, New Haven or Charleston; but how shall a visitor know the many historical treasures in the out-of-the-way towns of New Hampshire or South Carolina or Kentucky? To record and to catalogue is a necessary task, congenial to the much-abused antiquary, without whom our forefathers would be to us only myths.

Some time a pathway will be blazed for the pilgrim to his country's monuments all the way from Acadia to California; meanwhile something may be done to make the closet historian (if there be any such in this age of realities) acquainted with the appearance of the scenes he describes. The lantern-slide has become an agent of civilization: we ascend the Pyramids on its convenient ray; we traverse Arctic solitudes; we see voiceless guns belching shells at an enemy—may we not also let the lantern be our guide to far-away buildings and battle-fields? Might not those "other people who have nothing to do" get together collections of slides, illustrating their own neighborhood or state? And might not such slides be catalogued and sold in sets, or borrowed and lent, and thus made a part of historical instruction?

Who is to do this work of identification, of marking sites, of providing the necessary monuments, of preparing photographs and slides? In many places the state or local government will take up the task if properly inspired; and indeed most municipalities are pleased to find that they have spots worth marking. In other cases the work must be done by private societies, whose sole function shall be historical; for though Sons and Daughters of Historical Periods have their usefulness, they do not often promote exact historical work. Among special societies formed to rescue historical sites the first is the admirable Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities, which is now doing the work of examining, listing and preserving the memorials of its ancient commonwealth. One of its services is to bring people who have money and good will, but no especial knowledge of the treasures in their neighbor-

hood, into relation with things that need to be done, with such results as the embanking of the remnants of Jamestown Island. Another typical organization is the Harvard Memorial Society, which exists only to search out and mark sites memorable in the history of that university.

Of "monuments" in the narrower sense the country has too many and too few : too many of the type of that marvel of useless stone-cutting, the Soldiers' Monument in Cleveland, forced upon an unwilling city by an artless state legislature ; too few like the Shaw Monument in Boston, a really individual and inspiring work of art, which could be set up only for the one man whom it commemorates, and yet through him speaks of the heroism of armies, and raises the moral standard of every man who sees it. Let towns and cities remember Hawthorne's injunction : "The man who needs a monument should never have one."

For the historian the buildings of our ancestors are a lesson and an illustration, but he cares especially for official records of events. The thirteen colonial legislatures, the active town-meetings in New England and the county courts in the South, have furnished a large number of separate records ; but, notwithstanding local pride and the pressure of genealogy-hunters, we have nothing approaching complete printed records of a single colony. Many states have worked at the task for years, notably Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts and North Carolina, but the results in most cases are confused or fragmentary. For instance the Massachusetts "resolves" of the provincial period have not been all collected, because the editor could not bring himself to publish simply the texts, but insisted on sending them out to the world embellished with valuable notes. The legislature lost patience after twenty-eight years of publication, which had included only eighty-nine years of statutes and sixteen of resolves, and suspended the whole enterprise. No better field for enlightened lobbying could be found than in persuading legislatures to print their own colonial or early state records, as simply and as expeditiously as is possible, while making accurate transcripts ; posterity may be relied upon to furnish the *scholia*.

Local records have been notoriously neglected, and on the whole very few have been printed in full. Boston, Providence, Worcester, Southampton (Long Island) and now New Amsterdam have published the fullest sets. Here again is a field for the friend of history, and the lover of quaint literary extracts. For instance, when you read of the town of Lee that in 1779 its discontented

citizens voted that they held themselves "bound to support the Civil Authority of the State for the term of one year," you are tempted to possess a copy of the whole record of that town. The thing is not so difficult as it seems; local newspapers will often gladly publish successive installments of the records, and allow the type to be rearranged in pages for a more permanent publication.

The archives of the states since the end of the Revolution are in a deplorable condition: the records are in many cases badly stored, very few of them are calendared; and in many instances they are almost unknown even to their custodians. When an investigator wishes information out of such collections he can find little if he searches for himself, and he has still less likelihood of getting information by correspondence. To meet this difficulty a plan of co-operation has been suggested; it provides for a kind of interstate board made up of one person from the neighborhood of each state capital, or large city, who should make it his business to learn the ins and outs of the archives, and should select competent searchers and copyists. To such a person the seeker after truth might apply with the certainty that he was dealing with some one who understands his needs and could put him in the way of information and of hiring proper transcribers. The labor required of each of these unofficial archivists would be small; the service to historical study would be great.

In some respects the national archives are in better shape than those of the states; and they contain large masses of material of the utmost importance. In general the custodians of United States documents show much patience and courtesy, but they are too few and too much occupied to do what they would like for the visiting scholar; and in many fields of great importance reasons of state forbid a close search. For instance, the Confederate archives deposited in the War Department have been opened to very few scholars, because of the relation of those papers to claims on the government. The recent appointment of a trained historical scholar as head of the Department of Manuscripts in the Congressional Library is a step which promises to make available much buried material. But even such an official must expect sooner or later to meet the elastic obstinacy which recently defeated a head of a bureau in one of the Departments at Washington, who was armed with unlimited authority from his Secretary to search the records for certain historical material; he found that nothing could overcome the obstinate determination of the custodian, that nobody should invade his documents.

The first necessity with regard to the government archives is to calendar the great series of manuscript material for use *in situ*; the

next step is to enter on a scientific publication of certain classes of that material. The proper beginning would be a new critically prepared edition of the *Journals of Congress* from 1775 to 1788; for while selected parts of these journals were printed at the time, and have since been reprinted, and omitted parts were later published separately as the *Secret Journals*, neither set is very accurate. Another prime necessity is a critical edition of the Ordinances of Congress having the force of permanent law, from 1775 to 1788; it is hard to see how the federal courts have got on without such an official publication. Then might well follow selections from the manuscript Reports of Committees and other congressional papers of Revolutionary times. The next step should be the publication of new national editions of the works of the great American statesmen, from the large collection of manuscripts in the archives of Washington, supplemented by other sets held elsewhere. It hardly seems suitable that the Washington, Jefferson and Monroe papers, the property of the government, should contain material known to the public only through very expensive limited editions of private publication. We are grateful for the enterprise which makes such material available in any form; we should be more grateful if the government would itself issue in generous and scholarly editions the works of the great statesmen.

So far as kindly Uncle Sam is concerned there is little hope for an enlightened publication or calendaring of the invaluable materials which he owns, except under powerful organized pressure. Many members of Congress are alive to the importance of opening up the government store-houses, but they must perforce feel the greatest zeal in such matters as constituents press upon them. What is needed is a persistent and widely-diffused understanding of and insistence on the value of these records and the importance of publishing them. Now that the Civil War series is nearing completion, and now that people appreciate the necessity of permanent records of the Spanish war, perhaps the attention of Congress may again be fixed on the records of the Revolution and of the formative period of our government.

What once goes into public archives usually stays there till somebody makes it available; and official custodians presumably at least intend to protect their charge from the dangers to which papers are always exposed—fire, damp, insects and animals, the ravaging autograph-pirate and ignorant destruction. Private manuscripts and rarities have no such traditional protection and are perishing every day. A few perfectly authenticated incidents will show

how little the public realizes the value of written material, even from the collections of public men. Recently some children in Barnstable, Massachusetts—a prosperous and intelligent town—were seen making a bonfire of papers, which had been taken out of a stable-loft or some such receptacle. The holocaust was stopped in time to save about a barrel of documents, which proved to be valuable correspondence of 1765 on the Stamp Act. Upon the death, within fifteen years, of a well-known public man of Missouri—member of Congress during an important period of our national history—his family presented his library of books to a college of the state. The professor of history, knowing that he possessed a unique collection of pamphlets, hastened to ask for them also, but found that all the pamphlets had been burned, “for of course they were of no value.” A son of a most distinguished American statesman was applied to for information about one of the rarest of Americana, rightly supposed to be in his deceased father’s library, and in surly fashion refused to make search for it; but he afterward found it and violently attacked the searcher for saying truthfully that the document had been “inaccessible.”

The pursuit of the papers of the late Chief Justice Chase has in it the materials for one of the veracious law-reports of the late Sherlock Holmes. Mr. Chase was a man who perfectly understood the importance of preserving his papers, who kept careful journals and letter-books, and filed all important letters addressed to him. Here, if anywhere, the path of the investigator ought to be smooth. But the search, begun less than twenty years after the jurist’s death, revealed the fact that, through no fault of his family, all these papers had utterly disappeared, and could not be found after patient search in four different cities. One volume of the journals, containing the account of the Cabinet discussion on the Proclamation of Emancipation, was by an accident discovered in the hands of a kinsman, to whom it had been given by a third party, neither of them dreaming of its importance. The letters had reposed for nearly twenty years in the vaults of a trust company, from which they were extracted only by the persistence of a distinguished American historian, who must have greeted them as did Poggio Bracciolini the manuscript of Quintilian in the tower of St. Gall: “I verily believe that if we had not come to the rescue, he must speedily have perished. He was indeed right sad to look upon and ragged, like a condemned criminal, with rough head and matted hair, protesting by his countenance and garb against the injustice of his sentence.” The diaries turned up in the hands of an old friend of Mr. Chase in a distant state, and at his decease would

probably have been unknown but for the chance finding of a letter of inquiry among the dead man's letters. Important letter-books are still absolutely missing, as well as scrap-books and other illustrative material. It required literally years to resuscitate a part of the papers once so carefully preserved.

How is the public to be educated up to an understanding of the value of historical material? Now and then a collection is rescued from loss or scattering as were the three thousand Jefferson documents recently presented by a descendant of the great Democrat to the Massachusetts Historical Society ; but material is perishing every day for lack of intelligent interest in the deeds of our fathers or the memorials of their deeds. One longs for the Mohammedan superstition against destroying the smallest scrap of paper, lest it have written upon it the name of God.

The principal agency for the preservation of papers is the historical societies, whose function will be considered below ; but there are several other means of arousing public interest. One is, to set the public schools at work ; and a conspicuous example of success is the town of Brookline, Mass., where the pupils of the high school have identified historical sites, have used the unpublished local records, and have even printed some results of their modest investigations. Where there is no such wealth of interesting material as in Brookline, teachers may at least make it a part of their instruction in American history to call the attention of children to the value of manuscript materials, and to encourage their bringing into class for exhibition such interesting letters and papers as they may find in their own family possessions. Sometimes unsuspected treasures will be brought to light, as in the quiet Ohio family in which the head bethought himself of an old land-warrant, which proved to bear a remarkable autograph of President Andrew Jackson.

Local and state commissions, officially appointed, may be very helpful in smelling out forgotten manuscripts ; and Massachusetts and Rhode Island have established such commissions, so as to put pressure on the town authorities to preserve their records. Should the interstate archive commission suggested above ever be created, the resident member in each state might eventually become practically such a public conscience himself—with or without official appointment ; or he might move public sentiment toward the organization of a record commission.

Manifestly, however, the most effective work in these lines is to be done by a permanent national commission. Since none has ever been created by the government, the American Historical Association in 1895 provided for a body of five persons to be known as

The Historical Manuscripts Commission ; and the first volume of the results of their work has appeared in the annual report of the Association for 1896, as a government publication. The energy of the commission is shown not only by this valuable volume, but by its obtaining the right to use the long secluded John C. Calhoun papers, which are to appear in a new volume of the reports. Interest and aid in the work of that commission have been widely secured ; what it now needs is the co-operation of local and state societies and the use of more funds than the \$500 a year generously voted it by the American Historical Association. The Manuscripts Commission is now at work searching for records of a century or half a century ago ; in due time their labors should so affect public sentiment that fifty years hence the historian may find the documents of our own period carefully kept and intelligently opened to his study.

The preservation of historical material will help future writers, but another of the duties of historical students is to work out results. Until about thirty years ago most of the conscious historical writing in this country was either put into elaborate works or into solid articles in periodicals ; the monograph was little known. Two influences have since led to keen and intelligent monographic work in the United States : foreign example and the opportunity of publishing in series.

When Charles Kendall Adams in Michigan and Henry Adams in Massachusetts began about the same time in the seventies to introduce the "seminar method" of historical study, they made their students acquainted with the painstaking research in very limited fields which characterizes the German "doctor's dissertations," and they encouraged like study and publication by their students. Then came the influence of the *Johns Hopkins Studies*, the first systematic collection of such detailed work in America. Some brief historical monographs have also been published from time to time in the periodicals of political science, economics and sociology, and several of the universities have now entered on the issue of formal series of monographs on subjects in American history and government, besides the many individual ventures.

The quality of much of this work is high, and many young American scholars are thus preparing the way for future historians. In several respects, however, monographs are less effective than they ought to be. The first defect is duplication, due to the fact that there is no convenient way of finding out either what has been done or what is being done in the subject which the student may

select ; hence he may discover at the end of his labors that his work is superseded before it is ready. It would greatly serve "the cause" if monograph material, including the more elaborate articles in periodicals, were somehow kept catalogued, so that investigators might learn where to look for light and beginners might know what to avoid. Already the professors of American history in some of the large universities have been induced to combine in preparing an annual co-operative list of the doctor's theses now under way.

Another defect is the slowness with which the most serious and startling gulfs are filled. No subject in American constitutional history is so important as the congressional system of government ; yet it is only within three years that we have had any systematic account of either the Committee System, the Senate or the Speaker of the House. We have still absolutely no detailed account of the Confederate States of America or of Spanish diplomacy with the United States. There is no monograph on presidential removals from office, or the Seminole war, or President Grant's relations with the Cuban imbroglio. If some historian of weight would only print his list of desiderata, many aspirants for historical reputation would be amazed at the vast amount which remains to be done.

The more important results of monographic work seem readily to find publishers ; but there is a body of shorter or more abstruse works for which there is no regular medium. The American Historical Association has sometimes published such work in its *Papers* or *Annual Report*—for instance, the recent elaborate account of *Proposed Amendments to the Federal Constitution* ; and many painstaking pieces of work find refuge in little-read publications of local societies ; but the country needs to furnish some kind of opportunity for really scholarly works on American history, which are too brief or too detailed for commercial publication. At present recourse in such cases must ordinarily be had to the writer's pocket, or to the publication fund of his university.

A means of stimulating scientific work in history, very familiar in other countries, is the offering of prizes. Many of the colleges have special prize funds ; but competition is usually limited to students of that institution. Mr. John C. Ropes has recently set an example of reform by offering a prize for brief monographs in subjects drawn from Napoleon's career, open to students of several universities. What is now needed, however, is an annual national prize, or series of prizes, offered in such a way as to make success a distinguished honor, so that an award may help a man's whole career. The money value ought to be enough to make it an object, and the circumstances of the award such as to bring the suc-

cessful contestant's name and work to the knowledge of those interested in history throughout the country.

One of the fundamental needs of American history is a proper general history of the United States, and the ambitious youth can set before himself no task more important or more difficult. Besides the old-fashioned historians like Bartlett and George Tucker, few writers have essayed the task of setting forth the complete history of their country except in brief and ordinarily juiceless text-books. Bancroft spent fifty years in his attempt to "write a history down to his own time" and stopped fifty years back of the date when he first entered on his labors. The next generation of writers, Parkman, Henry Adams, McMaster, Rhodes, Schouler and the rest, have chosen limited fields. Fame, large royalties and national gratitude will be the meed of him who in two or three compact volumes will set forth a scholarly and yet interesting history of the things that have really told in the life of the nation.

Till this new historian come, furnished with the accuracy of Hildreth, the breadth of view of Bancroft, and the style of Parkman, we may perhaps reach the same end by the co-operative method. To fit together the work of many writers in right perspective is always difficult, and in a brief work almost impossible. Justin Winsor's mighty *Narrative and Critical History* is a kind of pudding-stone in which the boulders furnished by the writers are set in a matrix of the editor's learning, which circumfuses and permeates the whole mass. A supplementary volume, covering the last hundred years of our history, would be a boon to historical students; but where is there another master-mind like Winsor's? Nevertheless it is worth considering whether the right kind of combined effort might not enlist six or eight specialists in making a National History of the United States, under the auspices of some acknowledged authority.

Besides a general history we need several careful studies of special phases of American history. First of all we lack a constitutional history of the colonial period, in which the variations of English institutions under the conditions of a new life shall be set forth, and the principle of "the survival of the fittest" shall be applied to our present systems of government. We need quite as much a constitutional history of the Revolution which shall discover the real causes of that great division in the English race, and, at the same time, shall clear up the transition from colonial to state and national government. The germs of our present federal system are to be found in the period from 1775 to 1778; and yet none of the general histories of the period really describes either the state or the national governments of that time; and we have only scattered

monographic work. The history of slavery is also still to be written: Von Holst has taken up the political side; but there is room for a dispassionate account of what slavery actually was on the plantation and in the mansion, and how it affected the lives of white men and women. The constitutional side of the Civil War is also to be studied as yet only in brief articles or chapters; we do not know the whole story of the vicissitudes of the constitution in that epoch.

There is a like paucity of the right kind of books on industrial and social life in America. We know what political principles the colonists strove for better than we know what were their moral and business standards. The kinks in the reasoning of our forefathers on such subjects as smuggling, piracy, the slave-trade, and Indian neighbors, are still a puzzle to their descendants. Did the Puritan clergy crack jokes after the Thursday lecture? Did the Pennsylvania German trader water the rum intended for white people? Was the slave-dealer a respected citizen in Georgia? Did the merchant systematically pay his debts to the English manufacturer? Such questions and others more important can be answered only after much delving in colonial archives, much expenditure of gray matter and much wear on modern pens, typewriters and typesetting machines. Land and land-tenure is perhaps the most difficult subject of historical research; yet we really know more about the "hide" and "free and common socage" than about the granting, survey, recording, transfer, quitrents and taxation of colonial land, or the occupation of the West in the early part of our own century. Above all we have no systematic account of the chief concern of millions of our forefathers—their religion. Many are the histories of American churches; nowhere is there an account of religion as a vital, formative force in colonial and federal history. What we need to know about our ancestors, whether English, colonial, or nineteenth-century, is, what did they think was right and wrong in private and public affairs? To give us the means of answering that question is one of the best opportunities open to the coming historian.

Perhaps we cannot expect much further advance in secondary writing till we have better means of reaching the sources and the secondary works already in existence. A boon to every man interested in his country's history would be a discriminating bibliography. To say nothing of the existing single volumes of selected titles, more or less classified, there have been three attempts at American bibliography on a large scale. Sabin's *Dictionary of American Bibliography* has suffered from the same causes as the French Academy's *Dictionnaire*: it attempts a task almost impos-

sible; for in thirty years it has come down only to the letter S. Eventually the rest of the alphabet and a topical index are promised; but at best only a few libraries and individuals are likely to own nearly thirty volumes of a single bibliography. Winsor's *Narrative and Critical History* has become as much an essential for the historical student as Bradford's *History*, or the *Annals of Congress*, or *Niles's Register*; but it leaves almost untilld the Congressional period. Mr. Iles's new enterprise of making up a list of a thousand titles, each with a critical note by an expert, is a step in the right direction on the only feasible method: a limited work, carried through by co operation.

Neither of these three works fills the place of a scientific yet handy bibliographical manual for the historical student, or would be superseded by such a manual. Here, if anywhere, is opportunity for skillful combination of the labor of many persons. What more suitable task for some historical organization with roots widespread than to enter on the preparation of a bibliography which might include, say ten thousand titles, classified by subjects, and each provided with a note setting forth its value? It is significant that Mr. Iles's plan for a similar work on a smaller scale has proceeded from the libraries and not from the historians. Certainly if a work like Leyboldt's *American Catalogue* goes out of print, and is picked up eagerly at seventy-five dollars a set, such a bibliography as has just been suggested would find nearly all the libraries and historical societies in the country among its purchasers, and would need no charitable support. And a system of annual or continuous indexes of new material, in pamphlets or on printed cards, would put a new tool into the hand of every student.

A good bibliography would not only be bought by libraries, it would help to create them; for it should include lists of historical books in successive, concentric rayons—"the best 50 volumes;" "the best 100 volumes;" "the best 200 volumes," and so on. The formation of collections of historical books, both on American and on foreign topics, is one of the duties which never should be forgotten, for it is the service of the craft to the country. Such collections as those of the Boston Public Library, the Lenox Library, the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, the John Carter Brown Library in Providence, the Burton Library in Detroit are the delight of the investigator; but they are already formed, and are permanent. The task is now to encourage the little town libraries to buy historical books and make them available, and to see to it that city and college libraries have full sets of standard sources, of secondary works and of periodicals.

More than that, this is the time to sweep up local and transient publications, and put them where the next generation will find them safe. Professor Willard Fiske had the pleasure of discovering a literature in his famous collection of books in the Romansch dialects ; he got that unique collection together by himself calling from house to house in the Engadine, and bearing away with him all the books that the peasants would sell. The "source method" might be applied in the schools of many country towns in America if they would preserve their valuable material ; we want the dusty piles of books out of the garrets ; we want the papers in the rubbish heaps in the cellars. It was only the other day that a wayfarer found in a refuse heap near his country home in New Hampshire a perfect map of Cheshire County—now almost impossible to buy ; perhaps by digging deeper he might have found Belknap's *History of New Hampshire*, or even an autograph letter of Governor Wentworth. Transient publications, pamphlets, fugitive reports—what the Germans graphically call *Flugschriften*—these are the worry of the tidy housekeeper, and the prize of the local library.

Newspapers too ought to be carefully sought and deposited in libraries. To be sure we may look forward to the time when the whole of Manhattan Island will be required for the storage of the files of the metropolitan Sunday newspapers ; but even at that time libraries will still be vainly trying to pick up an odd volume of the *Aurora*, or *Rivington's Gazette*, or *Niles's Register*, or the *Liberator*, to complete sets—a volume which is to-day going to light fires. The good sense of the editors of the *New Jersey Archives* has suggested to them the value of an index which will give a clue to the whereabouts of the most important colonial newspapers, and they have already published several parts of their invaluable key to the colonial issues. The same service might well be performed for the newspapers and rare periodicals down to 1861, and for Confederate newspapers during the Civil War. The need of the day is not more newspapers but some way to find those already published and to get at their contents.

Some of the services of newspapers have been performed by periodicals of various kinds. The *North American Review* from 1815 to 1870 abounded in serious historical articles, and the great illustrated monthlies of the present generation have much valuable material, both sources and secondary ; but one of the plainest duties of Americans is to keep up some periodicals expressly devoted to the subject of history. Some such have existed and then ceased to be. Such are Dawson's *Historical Magazine* issued from 1857 to 1875, and the *Magazine of American History* issued from 1877 to

1894. One reason for the discontinuance of these serviceable journals was that they were exclusively American. During the last quarter-century a new spirit has crept into the minds of students of their country's history: they see that it is not a subject disconnected from the general development of the world's history; they appreciate the interest and importance of other fields; they desire the aid of other men who are not so fortunate as to confine their attention to America. Hence all the historical periodicals founded in the last fifteen years have distinctly announced that they deal with foreign as well as American conditions and events.

Taking history in a large sense, as including economic, social and governmental development, there are now in the United States seven special periodicals of which the sole aim is to record and instruct in that field. In this classification no offence is intended to the votaries of Political Science, who consider that their specialty enfolds history, or to the sociologists who hold that sociology includes all other human sciences, although nothing with which they disagree is true sociology. The seven journals are, then: the (Columbia) *Political Science Quarterly*; the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (conducted chiefly by professors of the University of Pennsylvania); the *Yale Review*; the (Chicago) *Journal of Political Economy*; the (Harvard) *Quarterly Journal of Economics*; the (Chicago) *American Journal of Sociology*; and the AMERICAN HISTORICAL REVIEW. Although in every case contributions are solicited and received from scholars all over the country, all but one of these journals is a satellite, or rather a double star to some one institution of learning.

That the AMERICAN HISTORICAL REVIEW is founded on a basis of general co-operation is due to the self-abnegation of several universities which might have started periodicals of their own, but preferred to join forces with others. Whatever the result of this co-operative system, it seems to the editors the only way of founding a journal which shall presume to be representative of the great body of historical scholars and teachers in America. There are moments when it seems reasonable to hope that by and by other journals will divest themselves of their local character and join their energies in national periodicals; there is even a vision of four quarterlies, so timed that one of them shall come out each month, and covering the four fields of Political Science, Economics, Sociology and History, respectively. The main difficulty in such a fusion of interests is how to arrange for such control and support of the various organs as shall make them all permanent, and genuinely national in spirit and direction.

Since history is not only a pursuit for the learned but a study familiar in schools of every grade, the question of methods of teaching has come to be serious both for historians and for educators. Probably no branch of learning has been habitually worse taught in America: methods of parrot repetition of stale text-book phrases have crept all the way up from the district school to the university. Even the notion of reading standard historical works as collateral to the text-books found a lodgment in the minds of college professors only about thirty years ago. To improve the teaching of history in schools, we must look, as a preliminary, to a more enlightened public opinion on the preservation and use of materials.

At present most of the well-known writers of history in America are either teachers of the subject or at least lecturers to college students; hence, there is a kind of pedagogical turn to much of the discussion in historical assemblages. College teaching has steadily improved under the influence of men themselves trained where history was properly taught—either at home or abroad; and history in colleges may now be trusted to care for itself. It is otherwise with teaching in schools, which is often of a character to justify the confused school-boy who once recorded for the writer's information that "The greatest men of Carthage were Hamilcar and Hannibal Hamlin;" or the other ingenious youth who said more than he was aware of when he asserted that "the Social War was fought in Bacteria."

To raise the schools out of the slough three influences have been at work: that of teachers who wanted to teach something; that of college authorities who framed entrance examinations in history; and that of historical investigators who saw the absurdities of the rote system. These influences converged in the first attempt to give national currency to ideas of reform, the Report of the Madison Conference on History and Government, made to the Committee of Ten in 1893. A second general conference was held at Columbia in 1896, made up of representatives of six universities and six secondary schools. It framed a new scheme of entrance requirements in history which laid emphasis on collateral reading and written work, and asked for recognition by the colleges of a good and extended school course in history. The scheme thus recommended has already been substantially adopted by Cornell, the University of Pennsylvania, Tufts, Wellesley, and Harvard. A third discussion of the subject has been that of the Committee of Seven, appointed by the American Historical Association in 1896, now engaged in the work of drafting school-programmes which will meet proper college re-

quirements, and expected to report to the Association in December, 1898. The outlook for a great increase of interest and efficiency in school history is therefore encouraging ; and the necessary specialist teachers are now being trained in the universities and colleges throughout the land. New text-books of much merit have also been produced, most of them by men who are experts in the subjects which they discuss ; and collateral reading has been made available in great variety. The result must be an intelligent interest throughout the country in historical records and historical writing.

The historical opportunity in the United States is appreciated ; to carry the good work farther a proper organization of scattered forces is necessary. The natural centres of activity are the local historical societies ; but there seems to be something in the nature of history which causes such associations to ebb, before they have reached high tide. To carry them on successfully, it is essential to develop intelligent, trained and interested directors, both men and women. Here is a career ready for some of those graduates of women's colleges, whose preparation seems wider than their later opportunities. In history, as in all subjects pursued in the scientific method, trained experts and enthusiasm are both essential.

Local societies can of course accomplish most for their own neighbors, especially in places that have interesting sites, or stores of unpublished manuscripts, or buried treasures of rare books. It will be a century before the society of any town or city will have marked all the spots that ought to be commemorated, and by that time there will be another century's accumulation. The state societies, with a few exceptions, have not reached the measure of their opportunities to help their communities and their country, some of them have become genealogical mills and others are reposing on the reputation of past publications. They have a great field and only need to be roused to their work. To give an example of the place which they might have in the public mind, the first thought of any intelligent person into whose hands comes manuscript of any kind should be : " Would the state society accept this ? or receive it ? or deposit it ? or publish it ? " Valuable material ought to reach these societies as certainly as meteorites reach a mineralogical museum, for on the state societies rests the responsibility of keeping the sources from perishing. Perhaps the usefulness of the societies may be increased by the plan suggested by Professor Salmon of Vassar, for inducing them to enter into a kind of confederation, so as to secure mutual understanding and work on common lines.

One of the most hopeful signs in the historical field is the

growth in members and influence of the American Historical Association, the only national society devoted exclusively to historical aims. Although not founded until 1884, it has already become a kind of clearing-house for historical efforts, and its large brotherhood of scattered members come together in meetings which give valuable opportunities of acquaintance with other members of the craft, and which concentrate attention on historical problems. The meetings of 1896 in New York and 1897 in Cleveland were like those of a large club for good fellowship, and brought out lively discussions on interesting topics. But these two meetings, and that of 1895 at Washington, are chiefly memorable for the deliberate acceptance of new functions. Besides issuing the *Annual Report* (published by the government) the Association in the three successive years has instituted the Historical Manuscripts Commission, set up a prize which has since been once awarded, created the Committee of Seven on history in schools, and considered the question of taking over the AMERICAN HISTORICAL REVIEW, an arrangement which the editors desire in the interests both of the periodical and of the Association; for all these laudable purposes the Association added works to faith by making generous grants of money. Whether the Association will go forward to assume any of the other labors which are waiting for an impulse is yet to be determined; but there is an injunction as well as a promise in the Scriptural suggestion: "To him that hath shall be given."

Plentiful are the American organizations which are trying to foster historical studies in multifarious directions; there is no lack of men or of organization, and will be none of material to work upon; for the next century will not be less exciting than that just expiring. Since behind records must stand things worthy of record, we may depend on the Hobsons and the Roosevelts to help make memorable history, just as John Paul Jones and Hull built up their country's renown. Perhaps a Central American contest may eventually overshadow the Mexican War; or the revolt of our distant colonies may one day cause us at last to understand our own Revolution. We may leave it to later generations fitly to perpetuate the stirring events of our own time and of the future; our present duty is simply to follow the principle of the Cambridge town meeting of 1765 in its vote on the Stamp Act: "That this vote be Recorded in the Town Book that the Children yet unborn may see the desire their Ancestors had for their freedom and happiness."

ALBERT BUSHNELL HART.